



FAMILY SPOTLIGHT

THOUGHTS FROM GIRLS AND BOYS TOWN

The Original Father Flanagan's Boys' Home

Being 'Tough on Crime' Is The Easy Way Out

Father Val J. Peter, JCD, STD

(NAPSA)—It's popular today for politicians and bureaucrats to declare they are "tough on crime." They say locking up criminals will solve this rampant societal problem.

I agree criminals must pay back society for their crimes. But being tough on crime does not translate into reduced crime. In some ways it may increase it.



Fr. Peter

Throwing criminals in jail—especially youth who have a chance of being rehabilitated—and inflicting pain, humiliation and physical punishment on them does nothing to make them

or society better.

Our jails and prisons are breeding gang activity, abuse by staff and inmates, rape, beatings and other abuses.

The tough on crime philosophy also fosters a revenge versus rehabilitation mentality. For instance, last year, Girls and Boys Town made an effort to get two Pensacola, Fla., boys, Alex and Derek King, to come to its Nebraska program headquarters. The boys, 12 and 13 at the time, were convicted of murdering their father.

The get tough on crime judge initially sentenced them to an adult prison where they would be subject to rape, beatings, physical punishment and pain. In fact, I received letters like the ones below supporting this revenge:

- A woman in Connecticut wrote: "I believe in an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth."

- A man in Florida said: "These two boys need to be gotten rid of."

Sentences such as these will not help society be rid of these boys or the problems that put them in jail. They will be back in society in a few years and likely will be meaner, more hateful and ready to even the score.

In our programs, we are tough on crime in a way that is difficult for the youth and benefits society and our country.

Here is an example of ways we at Girls and Boys Town "get tough" on crime.

Girls and Boys Town Youth learn to:

- Study and learn.
- Discipline themselves.
- Make sacrifices and help others to flourish.
- Respect themselves and others.
- Be encouraged every time they begin feeling sorry for themselves.
- Apply all of the above after leaving Girls and Boys Town, focusing on being a pro-social member of society, instead of utilizing negative skills to continue a criminal career.



A significant percentage of our children show positive outcomes with this approach, and they have become productive members of society. This cannot be said for prisons. For many, it is just easier to sit in jail and become a statistic.

Getting tough on crime is the easy way out. To make things better for society and our country, we must make some tough choices—and being tough on crime in the political sense is not one of them.

Girls and Boys Town, the original Father Flanagan's Boys' Home, is a leader in the direct treatment and care of abused, abandoned and neglected girls and boys. Through 19 sites across the country, the organization directly cares for more than 37,000 girls and boys annually.

Girls and Boys Town also assists 1.5 million children and parents through its National Hotline (1-800-448-300), outreach and training programs and community partnerships.

